

**SOCIOLOGY 6041**  
**CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY**  
**University of Colorado Boulder**

**Semester:** Spring 2019  
**Seminar:** Wednesdays 3:00 – 5:30 pm  
**Office Address:** Ketchum 266  
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**Professor:** Rachel Rinaldo  
**Class Location:** ECON 16  
**Office Hours:** Weds 10-12

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is intended to familiarize graduate students with the dynamic subfield of cultural sociology. Cultural sociology is a vast field that overlaps with other social sciences such as anthropology and at times with humanities. It comprises the sociology of cultural objects and forms of cultural expression, the study of cultural life broadly understood, as well as an approach to sociological investigation that emphasizes meaning and interpretation. The sociology of culture is also methodologically diverse, ranging from classic qualitative approaches such as interviews and ethnography, to discourse analysis, historical, and quantitative and mixed methods approaches.

In this course, we will start by surveying many (but not all) of the main theoretical orientations as well as major concepts, problems, and themes in the literature. We will then move on to look at how cultural sociology approaches particular elements of culture such as cultural expression and how it intersects with related topics in the discipline, modernity, agency, inequality, economic life, art, and much more. I have included a mix of more theoretical and more empirical work, both classics and recent work. Although I have tried to cast the net widely as well as make sure you are familiar with canonical scholarship, it is simply not possible to cover all of cultural sociology in one class. If you are interested in issues or topics not reflected in this syllabus, I encourage you to ask me for suggestions for further reading. You will see that I have selected a number of *Annual Review of Sociology* articles – these tend to provide helpful literature reviews as well as current “state of the field” essays about particular topics. You can always look at the bibliographies of these pieces for more suggestions about literature on that topic.

The reading load for this class is fairly heavy in the early weeks. This is because there is now so much important literature that you need to be familiar with to fully grasp recent work in the field. The success of this class depends on everyone doing the reading and coming to class ready for discussions.

I also strongly recommend that you regularly skim the journals that publish cultural sociology, including *Poetics*, *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, and *Cultural Sociology*, among others. *American Journal of Sociology* and *American Sociological Review* occasionally publish important theory pieces.

## TEXTS RECOMMENDED FOR PURCHASE:

The following texts have been ordered at the CU Bookstore because we are reading most or all of them. You may also want to go through the syllabus and selectively purchase other books for which we are reading more than one chapter. Many can be purchased for relatively low prices from Amazon used booksellers. Please contact me if you are having difficulty affording books. When we are reading just one or two chapters from a book, these will be posted on Canvas and/or available on reserve at Norlin library.

Max Weber. 1904. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York Scribner.

Erving Goffman. 1956. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Penguin-Random House.

David Harvey. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Anthony Giddens. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford University Press.

Pierre Bourdieu. 1987. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press.

Michele Lamont. 2000. *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Nikki Jones. 2010. *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner City Violence*. Rutgers University Press.

Alison Gerber. 2017. *The Work of Art: Value in Creative Careers*. Stanford University Press.

Saba Mahmood. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press.

Ashley Mears. 2011. *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model*. University of California Press.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Class participation: 10%

This seminar is discussion based. I may lecture for the first 10-20 minutes, particularly in the first few weeks. You are expected to participate actively in class discussions, both by asking questions and making comments. Discussions will be based on the readings for that week.

### 2. Reading Reflection Papers: 40%

You are required to prepare two short essays that reflect on a particular theme in the readings for that week. Each essay should clearly identify a particular theme you found interesting or significant, develop a coherent argument about that theme, and also reflect on how the readings related to material from the preceding weeks of the course. Essays should be 5-6 double spaced pages and should include an additional page for citations. You will be assigned alphabetically for dates for these papers on the first day of class. You will submit these papers on Canvas.

### 3. Discussion Leading: 10%

Each student will help to lead one class discussion during the semester. This will consist of coming to class with at least three discussion questions prepared, and then playing an active role to help lead discussion. You should bring a handout with your discussion questions to class, which you will present after my introduction. The discussion questions can focus on particular readings, but at least

one question should be more synthetic, incorporating at least two readings. You will sign up for discussion leading on the first day of class.

#### **4. Final Paper: 40%**

You will submit a final paper that engages with one or more themes/topics from this course. This assignment can be tailored to your needs and interests. You could use it to write a literature review for a dissertation proposal; a theory essay, or a research article on a topic of interest to you. I will not accept a paper that has been written for another class unless it has been substantially revised to be appropriate for this class. You must situate your analysis within cultural sociology, make use of concepts, themes, and theories from the class, and critically reflect on the subfield. You are also welcome to discuss outside readings. I expect that your paper will be 10-20 pages double spaced, but the length is flexible (content and analysis are more important). **You should email me a one paragraph proposal for your final paper by March 1 (I will not provide written feedback if you email me after that date).** You are encouraged to meet with me before April 1 to discuss your final paper ideas and you can submit your proposal whenever you are ready. **The final paper is due on May 6 at 10 am. Hard copies should be placed in my mailbox.** You are welcome to submit it earlier, if you prefer.

#### **COURSE POLICIES:**

1. Graduate students are expected to treat class as part of their professional obligations by arriving on time and staying until the end of class. Although I will not take attendance, in such a small class I do notice absences. If you need to miss a class, send me an email so I know why. More than 1 or 2 absences may result in a reduction of your final grade.
2. We will have 10-15 minute break in the middle of class (around 4:15). You will sign up on the first day to bring snacks for the class.
3. Please keep track of announcements and syllabus changes. I usually make announcements in the beginning of the class and/or on Canvas. You should plan to check the Canvas site regularly for such information.
4. Please do your best to meet with me during office hours unless you have a genuine conflict with the time.
5. Grades are awarded on the basis of the quality of your work. This means written work which demonstrates good organization, sophisticated and sociologically informed content, correct grammar, and clear writing. In class discussions, this means thoughtful questions and comments that reflect your having read the assignments. Please see me right away if you are concerned about your grades. I will be using the Sociology Department's standard grading rubric:

A	Consistently performs well above expectations for the course
A-	Performs above expectations for the course
B+	Meets expectations
B	Occasionally performs below expectations
B-	Consistently performs below expectations
C	Unsatisfactory work for a doctoral student (not completing work, not attending class, poor performance on writing assignments, etc.)

**Note: This grading system means grades that consistently fall in the “B range” or below are cause for concern. Grading in graduate courses is significantly different from grading in undergraduate courses.**

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

### **WEEK 1 (January 16): Introduction and class logistics**

Come to class with an example of the word “culture” from a newspaper or magazine (digital or print) and be prepared to discuss the definition of culture implied in your example.

Section on “Culture” in Raymond Williams. 1976. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Pages 76-82.

William Sewell, Jr. 1999. “The Concept(s) of Culture” in Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds. *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

### **WEEK 2 (January 23): What is Cultural Sociology?**

Wendy Griswold. 1992. "Recent Developments in the Sociology of Culture: Four Good Arguments (And One Bad One)." *Acta Sociologica*: 323-328.

Jeffrey Alexander. 2003. *The Meanings of Social Life*. Chapter 1: The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology.

Small, Mario Luis, David J. Harding, and Michèle Lamont. 2010. "Reconsidering culture and poverty." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 629/1: 6-27.

*Recommended:* Cook, James W. 2012. "The Kids Are All Right: On the “Turning” of Cultural History." *The American Historical Review* 117.3: 746-771.

### **WEEK 3 (January 30): Early Foundations**

Karl Marx. Excerpt from *The German Ideology*. Pages 146-155 in Robert C. Tucker, ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

Max Weber. 1904. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York Scribner.

Emile Durkheim. 1912. Introduction and Chapter 1 in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Free Press. Pages 1-44.

### **WEEK 4 (February 6): Foundations continued**

Max Weber. 1915. “The Social Psychology of the World Religions” in Gerth and Mills, eds. *From Max Weber*. Pages 267-301.

Erving Goffman. 1956. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Penguin-Random House. Chapters TBA.

Herbert Blumer. 1969. "The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism." In *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*.

### **WEEK 5 (February 13): Further Developments in Marxist Cultural Theory**

Max Horkheimer and Theodore W. Adorno. 1946. "The culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception." Pp. 71-101 in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Raymond Williams. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford University Press. Part II, Chapter 1 "Base and Superstructure." Chapter 6 "Hegemony."

### **WEEK 6 (February 20): Classic Anthropological Theories of Culture**

Claude Levi-Strauss. 1962. *The Savage Mind*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1.

Mary Douglas. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. Chapters 1 and 2.

Clifford Geertz. 1973. "Thick Description." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.

### **WEEK 7 (February 27): Culture and Modernity**

David Harvey. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Wiley-Blackwell. Chapters TBA.

Anthony Giddens. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford University Press.

### **WEEK 8 (March 6): Culture and Taste**

Pierre Bourdieu. 1987. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press. Chapters TBA.

Richard A. Peterson and Roger M. Kern. 1996. "Changing highbrow taste: from snob to omnivore." *American Sociological Review*: 900-907.

### **WEEK 9 (March 13): Culture and Action**

Ann Swidler. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51(2): 273-286.

William Sewell, Jr. 1992. "A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation." *American*

*Journal of Sociology* 98(1): 1-29.

Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman. 2003. "Culture in Interaction," *American Journal of Sociology* 108(4): 735-794.

### **WEEK 10 (March 20): Culture and Classification**

Paul DiMaggio. 1997. "Culture and Cognition." *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 23: 263-287.

Michele Lamont. 2000. *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

*Recommended:* Omar Lizardo and Michael Strand. 2010. "Skills, Toolkits, Contexts and Institutions: Clarifying the Relationship between Different Approaches to Cognition in Cultural Sociology." *Poetics* 38(2): 205-228.

### **WEEK 11: SPRING BREAK**

### **WEEK 12 (April 3): The Intersections of Culture, Race, and Gender**

Nikki Jones. 2010. *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner City Violence*. Rutgers University Press.

Orlando Patterson. 2014. "Making Sense of Culture." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40: 1-30.

### **WEEK 13 (April 10): Producing Artistic Expression**

Pierre Bourdieu. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production*. Columbia University Press. Chapter 1.

Richard A. Peterson and Narasimhan Anand. 2004. "The production of culture perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology* (2004): 311-334.

Alison Gerber. 2017. *The Work of Art: Value in Creative Careers*. Stanford University Press.

### **WEEK 14 (April 17): Culture and Religion**

Saba Mahmood. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press.

Rachel Rinaldo. 2014. "Pious and Critical: Muslim Women's Activism and the Question of Agency." *Gender & Society* 28/6: 824-846.

## **WEEK 15 (April 24): Culture and Economic Life**

Marion Fourcade and Kieran Healy. 2007. "Moral Views of Market Society." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33: 285-311.

Ashley Mears. 2011. *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model*. University of California Press.

## **WEEK 16: (May 1): Recent Discussions in Cultural Sociology**

Steve Vaisey. 2009. "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 114/6:1675-1715.

Omar Lizardo. 2017. "Improving Cultural Analysis: Considering Personal Culture in its Declarative and Nondeclarative Modes." *American Sociological Review* 82(1): 88-115.

Phillip Gorski. 2017. "Why Evangelicals voted for Trump: A Critical Cultural Sociology." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*.